

Fanonian Neo-Colonial Insights in Bhattacharya's One Small Voice: Exploring Economic and Religious Exploitation in Postcolonial India

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Abstract

In general, the term "neo-colonialism" refers to the developed world's indirect connection with the developing world. Even after gaining independence, post-colonial studies demonstrate that colonialism and its agents continue to have a significant impact on the lives of the majority of former colonies in many ways. This paper uses Fanon's theory of neocolonialism in the setting of post-colonial India to examine economic and religious exploitation presented in Santanu Bhattacharya's novel *One Small Voice*. In accordance to Fanon's perspective it examines how the national bourgeoisie uses deliberate economic and religious hardships as instruments of social and political hegemony, exposing their effects on people's mentalities and social beings within communities. The novel centers on Shubhankar, a young Hindu Brahmin who grew up in the early 1990s and witnessed inter communal violence precipitated by the demolishing of the Babri Mosque. He is profoundly affected by this tragedy and begins to doubt the economic and religious norms of his country. So, this paper indicates that there is religious exploitation in the form of dividing communities for political purposes, as well as economic exploitation through resource scarcity, corruption, and structural inequality in post-colonial India.

Keywords: Post-colonialism, Neo-colonialism, Economic Exploitation, Religious Exploitation, Post-colonial India

Introduction

People are usually oppressed by systems that secretly govern their lives in civilizations where authority is frequently upheld by invisible forces (Davis &

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Slobodchikoff, 2018). This type of covert oppression, where economic disparity and religious deceit are the primary means of control, is powerfully shown in Santanu Bhattacharya's *One Small Voice*. As people negotiate a world characterized by societal instability and personal anguish (Swann Jr, Johnson, & Bosson, 2009), the novel, which is set against the backdrop of the 1992 communal riots in India, reveals the profound scars left by religious violence and economic exploitation. Bhattacharya tells the tale of Shubhankar, a young child whose identity and relationships are irrevocably altered as a result of experiencing extreme violence throughout his early years. *One Small Voice* illustrates how systemic forms of exploitation operate covertly, dominating people without the need for overt conflict or dissent, via Shubhankar's journey.

Literature has extensively discussed the overt brutality of communal riots, but Bhattacharya's work focuses on the more subtle, hidden forms of oppression that reflect neocolonial dynamics (Bhattacharya, 2017). Neocolonialism refers to invisible systems of control that remain long after official colonial rule has ended (Udegbunam, 2020). Class discrimination, religious repression, and economic policies are some of the most prevalent means of maintaining these types. The novel *One Small Voice* shows how economic exploitation, which is based on class discrimination, and religious exploitation, which is based on communal hatred, are unavoidable systems to which people are continuously exposed, rather than being signified as a singular phenomenon (Bhattacharya & Realism, 2020).

One Small Voice's characters frequently lack the strength to oppose the subtle ways that religious and economic institutions influence their choices, perspectives, and sense of self. Bhattacharya's depiction of these topics reflects broader societal processes that continue to shape contemporary Indian society (Rehman, 2024), where colonial legacies are still deeply rooted in day-to-day life. Based on the neocolonial conditions of postcolonial India, this paper examines how Bhattacharya's *One Small Voice* examines economic and religious exploitation as covert yet potent tools of tyranny. This article will examine these themes in the novel to see how they impact the characters' relationships, sense of self, and agency. This will allow for a much more thorough examination of oppression and power in Indian society.

In his 1964 book *Colonialism and Neo-colonialism*, Jean Paul Sartre used the phrase "neo-colonialism" for the first time. The phrase has taken center stage in African

philosophy, especially in the field of African political philosophy. Sartre argues in the book for the quick emancipation of France from its former colonies and the abolition of the effects of French policies on them. Nonetheless, the phrase was initially used formally in Africa participated in several sessions of the All African People's Conferences (AAPC), a significant political organization, in the late 1950s. Neo-colonialism is the persistence of the colonial system in numerous African nations, making them the targets of political, forms of power that are social, military, economic, and technical (Arokiasamy & Jayanthi, 2019).

Neo-colonialism is the continuance of colonialism in the shape of an economic model following the official political independence of a colonized territory (Nkrumah, 1965). The sociopolitical climate of India in the late 20th century, which was marked by the rise of neocolonial forces and the effects of colonialism, provides a strong basis for Santanu Bhattacharya's *One Small Voice*. Despite India's 1947 independence, the story demonstrates how postcolonial countries continue to be exploited in various ways, such as economic dependency and religious manipulation the things that are often associated with neocolonialism. *One Small Voice* echoes the systemic religious and economic exploitation that lasts long after the colonial rulers have departed.

Review of the Literature

Examining how neo-colonial mechanisms uphold economic, social, and cultural oppression in post-colonial environments reveals a variety of viewpoints among contemporary scholars. In "The Last Man in Tower" by Aravind Adiga, Arokiasamy and Jayanthi (2019) discuss how neo liberalism and globalization have contributed to broader economic and social rifts in post-colonial India. Through a socioeconomic and cultural analysis, they look at how the novel's real estate developers reflect larger economic pressures that disregard vulnerable people. Their examination of economic exploitation offers a compelling critique of the ways that neo-liberal ideology-driven wealth disparities perpetuate exclusion and inequality in post-colonial countries.

Addei et al. (2013) highlight the neo-colonial exploitation that the elites of Kenya continued to engage in after independence in the analysis of Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood* and *Matigari*. Ngugi reveals the infidelity of the native elites by exposing how the goals of independence were seized by those who uphold colonial

subjugation through exploitation and corruption. This theme analysis of socio-political disillusionment is in line with the criticisms made in Adiga's writing because both authors emphasize how ordinary people are imprisoned in unjust institutions that yet benefit those in positions of power.

The historical foundations and ongoing effects of colonial economic exploitation are highlighted in Angela's (2021) postmodern analysis of Amitav Ghosh's *River of Smoke*. By relating the opium trade to contemporary globalization, free trade, and ecological devastation, Angela shows how Ghosh critiques both historical and contemporary forms of neo colonialism through the lens of historical metafiction (Artale, 2023). Karumuhinzi's (2022) research on economic exploitation is enhanced by Angela's work, which highlights how neo colonial systems have changed to still have an effect on modern communities. Both Ghosh and Ngugi show how economic exploitation under neo-colonialism is similar to colonial exploitation, demonstrating how the residue of colonial power structures continues to threaten true independence. These works highlight the subtle yet ubiquitous impact of colonial ideas by denouncing economic practices, lingering colonial legacies, and the distortion of cultural narratives. Collectively, they urge decolonized approaches to social justice and cultural preservation, challenging the persistent hold of neo-colonial power in the modern world.

Christophe Jaffrelot, in his book *The Hindu Nationalist Movement and Indian Politics* (1996) highlighted the legal unlocking of the Babri Masjid on February 3, 1986, as an important turning point in the rise of Hindu nationalism. The ruling from the Faizabad district court granted Hindu devotees' access to inner sanctum of the mosque, which had remained locked since 1949 due to communal tensions. Jaffrelot emphasized that this event exceeded a mere legal ruling; it was a strategic political operation that coincided with growing pressure from Hindu nationalist organizations like the VHP and the RSS (Jaffrelot, 1996, pp. 402–404). The instant outcome was a strong reaction from the Muslim community, which viewed the dominant as an infringement on secular values and minority rights. Consequently, the Babri Masjid Action Committee (BMAC) was established on February 5, 1986, serving as a collective Muslim platform to oppose the invasion of mosque and to advocate for the legal and religious rights of Muslims (Jaffrelot, 1996, p. 405). Jaffrelot presented that the creation of BMAC not only heightened communal divisions but also enabled Hindu nationalists to frame the issue as a larger cultural and civilizational battle, reinforcing their narrative of reclaiming a lost heritage.

Thus, this incident signified the onset of a new era of communal mobilization, where legal frameworks, religious symbols, and political strategies aligned to transform the Indian political arena.

Numerous researchers have studied the problem of religious exploitation in the context of neo-colonial dominance by analyzing colonial legacies, post-colonial literature, and the impact of religious organizations on colonized groups of people. Miller (2014) examined the influence of Fanonian ideology on the representation of neo-colonial themes in Ngugi Wa Thiong'o's *A Grain of Wheat*. According to Miller (2014) Ngugi criticizes the Christian Church's support of colonial tyranny and cultural imperialism. Fanon's claim that neo-colonialism persists after the official end of colonialism, with former colonial powers exerting influence through cultural and religious institutions, is supported by the description of the church's role in the Kenyan colonial enterprise as a means of maintaining colonial control. The persona of Ngugi in line with Fanon's theories of resistance against oppression through cultural re-empowerment, Kihika the protagonist critiques the immoral aspects of colonial Christianity while promoting a more compassionate version of the religion that supports the fight against colonialism.

Eid (2000) discovers the theme of religious exploitation in greater detail in her analysis of Naipaul's *A Bend in the River*. Eid (2000) observes the neo-colonial refrains of the novel, namely their influences to Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Miller (2014) focuses on the theological manipulation in Ngugi's narrative, whereas Eid (2000) expands the critique to include broader political and social dimensions of post-colonial oppression. The aesthetic and political elements of the novel are thoroughly examined in Eid's (2000) research, which also assesses how Naipaul critiques post-colonial African societies for lacking self-governance and authenticity. According to Eid (2000), Naipaul's description of post-colonial Africa connects with imperialist ideologies that continue to support the necessity of foreign control over African nations. Both of these complaints pertain to the persistence of colonial ideologies: Ngugi attacks the role of Christianity in upholding colonial rule, while Naipaul criticizes the broader failure of post-colonial African leadership.

In conclusion, the studies by Miller (2014), Eid (2000), and Jaffrelot (1996) prove the continuing impact of neo-colonial oppression, emphasizing the importance of social inequality, the imposition of foreign ideologies, and religious exploitation.

Theoretical Framework

This paper explores Bhattacharya's novel *One Small Voice*, examining the themes of religious and economic exploitation with a focus on neocolonialism. It employs Frantz Fanon's insights, particularly his theories presented in *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), to examine the economic and religious repercussions of neocolonial forces on societies that were once colonized, aiming to explore how Bhattacharya's characters are affected by both economic and religious exploitation. Fanon emphasizes the ways in which neocolonialism feeds a cycle of dependency and disenfranchisement by using the financial resources and religious beliefs of the oppressed.

Fanon points out that the national bourgeoisie, following independence, often collaborates to continue the cultural and economic exploitation initiated by colonial rulers. Fanon contends that the national bourgeoisie prioritizes their own money accumulation and power consolidation over the demands of the populace, using the same exploitative strategies as the colonial elite. Fanon contends that the national bourgeoisie prioritizes their own money accumulation and power consolidation over the demands of the populace, using the same exploitative strategies as the colonial elite.

Fanon talks about how the ruling class deliberately manipulates religious and ethnic identities in order to maintain their dominance. In *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), Fanon argues that colonial and postcolonial leaders often exploit these divisions to prevent the oppressed from uniting. This strategy of dividing people along religious and ethnic lines is seen in *One Small Voice*, where social privilege and religious identity are used to maintain societal divisions. By looking at these links, this research will show how Bhattacharya's novel challenges neocolonialism and its effects on postcolonial countries, providing a critical viewpoint on how the economics, religion, and power all contribute to the continuation of exploitation.

Critical Analysis and Discussion

Set in India, Santanu Bhattacharya's fascinating novel *One Small Voice* examines identity and suffering in the face of societal injustice and religious violence. Shubhankar, a young Hindu Brahmin, is followed throughout the novel as he

navigates his moral and personal growth while also dealing with the unrest in his country. The narrative begins with Shubhankar's early 1990s childhood, during which he witnessed unsettling acts of intercommunal violence brought on by the destruction of the Babri Mosque, which in turn led to widespread social and religious unrest in India.

Furthermore, Shubhankar is profoundly affected by the Babri Mosque tragedy and begins to doubt the economic and religious norms that many in his immediate community take for granted. Shubhankar gains more understanding when he discovers how influential people take use of economic and religious disparities to further their political objectives. Since Shubhankar's family is firmly rooted in Brahmin culture, they frequently support these social advantages. His battles with his family's privileges pay off while others are left defenseless.

Economic Exploitation as a Tool for Domination

Bhattacharya's novel *One Small Voice* explores issues of class and identity while highlighting economic exploitation as a crucial tool of oppression. By emphasizing social differences and reiterating social hierarchies, Bhattacharya examines how the powerful use economic manipulation to keep control over oppressed communities. Because of structural barriers such as imbalanced finances and limited access to healthcare and education, the characters from lower socioeconomic classes are more vulnerable to exploitation and manipulation. They have no agents to speak for them and as a result they are marginalized and forced to be under a kind of colonization (Arokiasamy & Jayanthi, 2019). In *One Small Voice*, Bhattacharya provides examples of unequal access to opportunities and resources to illustrate how economic inequality appears in day-to-day living. While the poor are either exploited for their work or subjected to corrupt practices that impede their capacity to advance economically, the rich enjoy the benefits of long-standing systems of privilege.

Urban Disparities and Socioeconomic Divides in Bhattacharya's *Mumbai*: The colonial economic paradigm is criticized by Fanon for deliberately postponing the general advancement of colonized nations. Instead of establishing integrated, self-sustaining economies, colonial powers established institutions that promoted the development of certain districts or regions but only if they could make it easier for the imperial center to exploit and export natural resources. Colonial government

sometimes encouraged specific districts for growth, leading to an economy that was not integrated with the rest of the country. Rather, it put more of an emphasis on the extraction and export of natural resources to support metropolitan industry” (Fanon, 1961, 165).

Similar to Fanon, Bhattacharya offers a compelling commentary on the socioeconomic disparities that occur in places such as Mumbai, where the outskirts are characterized by destitution while the center is frequently the hub of progress and affluence. His depiction of Mumbai, the setting for the novel, highlights the sharp contrast between the thriving city core and the run-down suburbs. Bhattacharya demonstrates the idea that the characters encounter increasingly squalid circumstances as they depart from the city center, highlighting the environmental and social degradation that commonly takes place on the fringes of rapidly expanding metropolitan areas. As the narrator describes, “The further out they went, the more squalid it got” (Bhattacharya, 2023, 67). This portrayal of slums delicately conveys the issue of economic exploitation by demonstrating how ingrained it is in urban life, where disparities are commonplace and frequently taken for granted. Loneliness, alienation, deprivation, subjugation and subordination have become the everyday affairs of the subalterns (Arokiasamy & Jayanthi, 2019).

Fanon argues that this selective development, which was a type of economic exploitation, allowed colonial powers to maximize their revenues from the colony with minimal investment in its greater infrastructure. Because these emerging regions lacked the infrastructure and resources necessary to catch up, the economic gap continued even after independence. This strategy kept the majority of the colony in poverty and underdevelopment while enabling other areas to prosper. Consequently, colonialism impeded overall progress of the nation and sustained inequality (Fanon, 1961, 165).

Likewise, Bhattacharya portrays similar perspective by an event, when Shubhankar was travelling through Mumbai and got an answer from his cab driver. He says, “This is a city of smells, the driver said. Now you’ll smell garbage (Bhattacharya, 2023, 114). The city’s multiculturalism and the coexistence of wealth and poverty are reflected in its scents. The trash and public facilities evoke the issues of the poor, many of whom are economically exploited and labor in dirty, low-paying jobs. This assertion draws attention to the novel’s critique of urban inequality and the ways that social violence and neglect affect the protagonists’ day-to-day existence. The best

intentions of the recently decolonized countries in the Third World amount in the end to nothing and whatever it has is brought about by the powers of illusion (Eid, 2000).

Fanon claims that the national bourgeoisie that assumes power following independence usually puts its own money and prestige ahead of the common populace's financial necessities and welfare. Usually, this governing class inherits control over resources and industries, but they don't use it to promote development or equal distribution that would benefit the majority. Under this new ruling class, the distribution of wealth is poorly organized across many industries and is extremely concentrated. It does not adequately prioritize the requirements of society. Since the great majority of people still live in abject poverty and hunger, this upper class is a clear insult to the vast majority of the population (Fanon, 1961, 173). The concept of economic exploitation proposed by Bhattacharya is similar to Fanon's view of the national bourgeoisie's influence over economic policy. He portrays people's anguish as they struggle to obtain water, which is an essential need. The topic of economic exploitation in this context becomes evident when we examine the conditions that give rise to acts of desperation for water. The fact that people must fight for water is a reflection of the unequal distribution of resources, which puts the poorest at the most vulnerable. The writer narrates; "The locals flooded the lanes, pushing each other, kicking the dogs. Tanki aali re, they screamed into doorways" (Bhattacharya, 2023, 149). The aforementioned underprivileged community is excluded from reliable infrastructure and essential resources. This illustrates how poverty forces people into an undignified struggle for survival, thereby depriving them of even greater suffering. The ending of colonial order created hopes and ambitions for the newly independent countries but optimism was relatively short-lived (Eid 2000).

Marginalization of Economic Structures: Exclusion from Spaces of Wealth and Power: According to Fanon, the post-colonial national bourgeoisie openly pursues self-interest in politics and utilizes its influence to further their own financial interests rather than the welfare of society. Unlike colonial rulers who used complex ideological justifications to hide their exploitation, the new elite makes it clear that their authority is entirely for personal gain with little pretense. They don't try to hide the fact that they reign primarily for their personal gain. They are strong and self-sufficient because they have established their legitimacy and consolidated their power on their own" (Fanon, 1961, 165).

The novel reflects Fanon's notion that the ruling class openly manipulates the general populace, especially those from disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds. Bhattacharya narrates; "The common people are nimitta-matra, little specks of dust, blips on the timeline that carry them from election to election (Bhattacharya, 2023, 251). In the perspective of society as a whole, this remark suggests that the general public is disposable. Their voices, struggles, and lives are written off as inconsequential "blips" that serve the interests of the powerful without actually challenging or changing the system itself. This illustrates how exploitative economic systems are when they are operated in the open without concern for public opposition. It is the same technique that perpetuates in a new-colonial way across the globe where the poor locals are used as market tools and are considered as non-entity (Saeed, A & Ahmed, A. 2019).

According to Fanon, the new ruling elite inherits an economic structure that was largely created for resource extraction when colonial control ends, but instead of changing it for the good of society as a whole, they usually strengthen it for their personal benefit. This trend frequently results in an economy that is more concerned with external growth than internal advancement. These leaders fail to produce any significant national development and leave the mass of population in poverty by ignoring broad social welfare. It is more difficult to achieve any larger collective aspirations as a result of their haste for personal gain and profit, which undercuts more general objectives of national progress and unity (Fanon, 1961, 173).

Likewise, in the novel, Fanon and Bhattacharya's concept share similarities. He investigates the problem of economic exploitation by emphasizing the extreme vulnerability of the most marginalized, who are left to struggle for survival in dehumanizing conditions. Bhattacharya narrates, "Beggars, diseased, maimed, eyes gouged out, children with smaller children on their backs, held out bowls for money, tugged at sleeves, sang in high-pitched nasal voices" (Bhattacharya, 2023, 200). The beggars' physical degradation and excruciating anguish are highlighted in the description. The beggars must place themselves in humiliating circumstances where they must cling to people's sleeves, sing in nasal tones to attract attention, and plead for money in order to survive. This system benefits the affluent and privileged classes who walk by and may even make a financial donation because it maintains the status quo. In the colonial ages, the living standards that colonizer adopted, the same conventions have been adopted by the contemporary rich in third world countries (Saeed, A & Ahmed, A. 2019).

Psychological Academic Pressure: Precarious Position of the Middle Class: Fanon's perspective and the notion of the traditional conduct of India's ruling class are comparable. He takes issue with the national bourgeoisie's tendency to become more anti-national in its goals and to put more emphasis on defending its money and position than on empowering the populace. Their cynical actions are evident in their preference for profit over social welfare, which betrays a lack of genuine dedication to either the welfare of the majority or the advancement of the country. The national bourgeoisie abandons heroic modes of production and advancement after a few years in favor of following the route of a conventional ruling class, such as the colonizer. They begin acting in a conventional, anti-national, and cynical manner" (Fanon, 1961, 166).

Likewise, to the perspective of Fanon, since Shubhankar is also searching for something solid to hold onto in an increasingly unstable environment, his inner problems are comparable to the fear of losing what little one has. As the writer narrates, "We have to work every day to hold on to the little things we've acquired. And we fear that politicians will take even those away" (Bhattacharya, 2023, 99). It depicts the middle class as being in a precarious position. Keeping their modest belongings and social status is a daily struggle for the middle class. Their anxiety about losing what little they have worked so hard to acquire, particularly at the hands of politicians is the real threat to their safety. Bhattacharya asserts that while the disadvantaged population has the capacity to overthrow the current government, the middle class has the power to undermine it. Because of this, the government suppressed them in terms of their financial circumstances, making it impossible for them to observe what was taking place on a national level. The local is more of a joke being stuck in between the traditional norms of culture and the globalized traditional modes of so-called civilization (Saeed, A & Ahmed, A. 2019).

Religious Beliefs as a Tool of Subjugation

One Small Voice by Santanu Bhattacharya explores how religious beliefs and practices are commonly utilized to enforce tyranny and control, particularly by those in positions of power, in an effort to maintain social order or further political goals. The story explores the connection between religion and everyday life in India.

Religious Monopoly: Undermining Secularism to Foster Control: Fanon argues that although colonial forces employed these divisions to erode the colonized people's

resistance, the ruling class of the post-independence era still uses them to maintain its power rather than bringing the populace together. In order to keep its hold on power, the national bourgeoisie takes advantage of ethnic and religious differences, a method that Fanon traces back to the colonial strategy of "divide and rule." Ethnic and religious tensions are purposefully manipulated in order to divert public attention from the true political and economic problems, such as the lack of equitable national development and ongoing poverty. Fanon asserts that the ethnic and religious riots are further incited by the attitude of national bourgeoisie and their copying of the colonizers' worldview. However, in reality, the national bourgeoisie is doing it on purpose to seize total control of the government (Fanon, 1961, 171).

Similarly, when the destruction of the Babri Masjid is depicted in the novel as an instance of religious sentiments being manipulated by political actors to achieve political goals, Fanon's idea is in line with Bhattacharya's. By spreading a narrative of religious victimization and superiority, politicians were able to rally sizable crowds of people, which led to communal riots that decimated entire communities. Bhattacharya narrates, "6TH DECEMBER 1992 – A BLACK DAY FOR INDIAN SECULARISM" (Bhattacharya, 2023, 34). One of the main themes of the novel, which critiques the rise of religious fanaticism, is the breakdown of secularism in India, which is examined via the tragedy of the Babri Mosque. Jaffrelot asserts "For the Hindu nationalists an effective way of enlarging their audience after 1947 was by recourse to a strategy of ethno-religious mobilisation conceived in terms of an instrumentalist approach" (Jaffrelot, 1996, 80).

Fanon emphasizes the notion that the masses abandoned the national cause after independence after the national bourgeoisie had planted the seeds of monopoly. Fanon presents an example, pointing out that the Ivory Coast experienced bloody battles following independence, with the Dahomeans and Upper Voltans being the dominant groups in the economic sector. Frustrated, Ivorians turned their animosity and protests toward these people. This transition from mainstream nationalism to extreme manifestations like as racism, chauvinism, and ultranationalism illustrates how independence movements can become inwardly focused, breeding animosity based on racial or ethnic distinctions (Fanon, 1961, 171). In a similar vein Fanon's scenario is reminiscent of Bhattacharya's novel, which describes how Hindus begin slaughtering the entire Muslim community based on a few differing beliefs. The deliberate destruction of the mosque's domes is suggested

to have been a ceremonial act driven by anger and religious fervor. As the narrator says "Then they started beating the domes with axes and hammers" (Bhattacharya, 2023, 35). This demonstrates how readily political authorities can incite religious sentiment in an effort to impose social control and subordination. The incident thus marks a turning point in the use of religious identification to erode national unity and draw attention to continuing divisions within the society. Rather than being abolished by the revolutionary forces which reshape the nation, classism continues in the educated upper-class citizens who rise to power in the post-colonial government (Miller, 2014).

National Bourgeoisie's Subverting Law for Religious and Nationalist Goals: Fanon's critique of national bourgeoisie's ethnic mentality reveals that how they develop policies for the sake of their own interests rather than the national cause. Fanon contends that "the attitude of the national bourgeoisie makes it simple for recently independent nations to revert from identifying as a single nation to emphasizing ethnic groups and from operating as governments to tribal structures" (Fanon, 1961, 170).

Similarly, by presenting Fanon's viewpoint on how religion is being utilized as a tool by the political establishment, Bhattacharya broadens the story. In order to symbolize monopoly on behalf of India's contemporary political elite, he displays the persona of Suresh Mause, a well-known politician. When a Muslim young boy tries to hide in one of his relatives' house from the Hindu mob in order to save his life during the riots, Suresh Mause comments "And if the mob got whiff that a Muslim was hiding here?" (Bhattacharya, 2023, 49). Bhattacharya agrees with Fanon that Suresh Mause continues to treat all Muslims as though they were distinct individuals, even in spite of his sensitive responsibilities and his status as a crucial figure in the existing political system. Furthermore, his portrayal of the Muslim victim as undeserving of sympathy highlights the way in which religious identification is employed as a binary of allegiance: either a person belongs to "us" (Hindus) or "them" (Muslims), rendering Muslims undeserving of sympathy or defense. This explains the mass mentality and the exclusion of Muslims from moral and social issues. Ethno-political strife occurs when there is politics of confrontation (Gohar et. al, 2022).

Fanon argues that by failing to forge a unified national identity and allowing ethnic and religious divides to flourish as tools of control, the national bourgeoisie

frequently exacerbates these internal issues. One tribe may hate another or oppose solidarity because of ingrained colonial preconceptions, undermining African unity and promoting religious exploitation. Political leaders are criticized by Fanon for their deft use of narrative manipulation to manipulate the public. He reasons that the religious conflicts in Africa frequently have racial overtones and divide the continent into "White Africa" and "Black Africa." Sub-Saharan Africa is portrayed as primitive and uncivilized, while North Africa is considered as culturally superior and a component of European and Mediterranean civilization" (Fanon, 1961, 175).

Accordingly, by mirroring Fanon's view of us-versus-them attitude, Bhattacharya reveals the systematic injustices and ingrained biases. This selective categorization reflects the systematic use of religious identities in India to influence public opinion and maintain specific power relations. Similar to the division advocated by the African national bourgeoisie in Africa, this mindset splits India into two groups: Muslims and Hindus. The notion that the Hindu political establishment is not distinguishing between the Muslim and Hindu people is something Bhattacharya continues to discuss. The current Hindu administration in India is trying to use all of its power to smash Muslims while tolerating the oppressors of the Hindu crowd. It not only affects public opinion but also media narratives, political responses, and social perceptions of different communities. As in the novel, "When a Hindu riot, they're protesters. When a Muslim riot, they're terrorists!" (Bhattacharya, 2023, 241). The religiously motivated dichotomy between "terrorists" and "protesters" highlights the widespread misconception that Hindu violence is usually reduced or justified while Muslim violence is denounced and criminalized. According to this perspective, Hindus are presented as the true defenders of the country, whereas Muslims are frequently perceived as the obstinate foreigners. By raising moral and ethical concerns about this story, *The One Small Voice* challenges readers to think about the human cost of such contentious politics. At micro-level the authorities must try to develop feelings of brotherhood on interpersonal level so that the feelings of chauvinism can be eradicated from the minds of the people (Gohar et. al, 2022).

Conclusion

In order to show how these interrelated forms of oppression perpetuate the cycle of structural injustice, this article examines the themes of religious and economic exploitation in Santanu Bhattacharya's *One Small Voice*. The examination of

economic exploitation in the novel demonstrates its profound societal foundations, as the wealthy abuse their ability to defend their rights while the impoverished deal with a system designed to keep them in subjection. According to Fanon, as people learn more about their sociopolitical circumstances, they become more conscious of the oppressive systems that have been in place and how colonial powers have used religious and economic exploitation as means of control (Fanon, 1961, 202). So, in order to resist this oppressive system Fanon's call for understanding of the monopoly is essential to get rid of this existing cycle of exploitation.

Likewise, Bhattacharya demonstrates that religious exploitation is a deliberate approach practiced by the wealthy to control the general public. By escalating conflicts between indigenous and religious groups, the authority keeps marginalized people apart and prevents them from banding together in opposition. The intentional reinforcement of violence between religious groups, mostly the targeting of Muslim families by Hindu extremists, is one example shown in the novel of how religion is used to deflect attention from urgent political and economic issues (Singh, 2024). Fanon asserts that being responsible in a developing country means understanding that the key to progress lies in educating the masses and raising their awareness, including their political education (Fanon, 1961, 207). According to Fanon, political education aims to give people a profound awareness of their place in the political, social, and economic life of the country rather than just spreading knowledge or encouraging partisanship. Without this kind of education, he thinks, the populace runs the risk of becoming dominated by the national bourgeoisie or political elites, who might take advantage of them in the same way that the past colonial rulers did to them.

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Article Information:

<i>Received</i>	4-Apr-2025
<i>Revised</i>	28-May-2025
<i>Accepted</i>	10-Jun-2025
<i>Published</i>	15-Jun-2025

Declarations:

Authors' Contribution:

- All authors **Conceptualization, and intellectual revisions. Data collection, interpretation, and drafting of manuscript**
- The authors agree to take responsibility for every facet of the work, making sure that any concerns about its integrity or veracity are thoroughly examined and addressed

• **Conflict of Interest:** NIL

• **Funding Sources:** NIL

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